

The Voice of Gratitude.

2

AN ANNIVERSARY
S E R M O N,

To the Memory of the late

Rev. Mr. GEORGE WHITEFIELD;

Preached at GLOCESTER,

SEPTEMBER 30, 1773.

By CORNELIUS WINTER.

I also will shew you mine opinion, JOB xxxii. 17.

*He was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost, and of
faith; much people was added unto the Lord, ACTS
xi. 24.*

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The Voice of Gratitude.

AN UNIVERSAL

S E R M O N

To the Memory of the late

REV. MR. GEORGE WHITEFIELD:

Preached at CLOVESTON



By CORNELIUS WINTERS.

And that you will be able to see the
reasons why I have chosen this subject
for my sermon, and why I have chosen
this place for my sermon.

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

United for the Benefit of the POOR.

And that you will be able to see the
reasons why I have chosen this subject
for my sermon, and why I have chosen
this place for my sermon.

**To the POOR belonging to the Tabernacles
at London and Bristol.**

My dear Friends,

THE following sermon does not make its appearance in the world for any imagined excellency I conceive there is in it; my only design is to answer the title, and by an honourable, though short mention, of one of the best friends I ever had, to testify to the church and the world, the obligations I am bound in gratitude to think myself under to Mr. WHITEFIELD; and I must take the same occasion to intimate, that throughout the connection I had the honour of, with that great man, I did not seek to serve myself more than to be serviceable. When I first thought of making this discourse public, I intended to dedicate it to a person of distinction, whom I count worthy of *double honour*, till I was struck with the observation of the wise man, viz: The rich have many friends; and as dedications intend nothing more than tokens of our respect, to whom should I shew them more readily upon

such an occasion than to those who have the preference of the best of blessings, I mean the GOSPEL, whereby to be made rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom the LORD hath promised? Your's then, my dear brethren, is this sermon, whose servant he was, for Christ's sake, whose MEMORY was the occasion of it.

For some time I was a labourer among you; many of you knew my original, and (excluding boasting) it is a satisfaction to me, that I can review what manner of entering in I had unto you, and the whole of my behaviour while among you; that touching my moral conduct herein, I exercised myself always to have a conscience void of offence.—When I reflect upon my past labours, they are a sufficient cause of humiliation, and yet I am a wonder to myself, when I consider, how destitute of every *necessary* acquirement I at first made my appearance, and what incessant interruptions I met with.

A growing acquaintance with myself made me conscious of my inability to be so beneficial to you as I desired, therefore, *intirely at my own repeated request*, Mr. WHITEFIELD took me into America, where I thought I might be useful in a sphere that nobody would envy me; and where, free from all the trials attending a more popular life, I might glorify God and be serviceable to the most oppressed and afflicted part of my fellow creatures. During my state of trial in this humble situation, my habitation was a Beth-el,
my

my soul was possessed with the peace that passeth all understanding; my black charge was dear to me, and I much desired the time when I should be in a capacity to serve them according to my utmost wishes, and for ever retreat from a world of vanity. This happiness I am obliged to say the B——p of L——n, most unkindly and ungenerously deprived me of, though I sought it at the hazard of my life. And no sooner did I meet with his unkind treatment, than by an instance from another quarter, (which I desire to bury in eternal silence) I was taught to cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils.

You my brethren, at Bristol, know how pressingly and at what a critical juncture I was brought into your service; in which I still consider myself engaged, though less frequent than formerly, owing to the observance of a piece of wholesome advice, dear Mr. WHITEFIELD often gave me, viz. BE SERVANT LIKE, BUT NOT SERVILE. And blessed be the Lord, I find there are doors enough open to me, quite beyond my expectation; my feet have been set in a large place; the POOR are the subjects of my itinerant ministry, and I can say, as the result of my strongest affection for them, I am willing to spend and be spent for them, not doubting, but when I can do no more, the Lord will take care of my feeble remains.

I most sincerely rejoice in the continuance of your mercies; and congratulate you upon the

fresh set of labourers raised among you; esteem them highly in love, and let the word preached have an influence upon your lives; be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, that their services in preaching may be profitable unto you. For the honour of the gospel depends upon your obedience to its prescriptive teachings: it signifies nothing what you profess; if your life is not squared by the rule of the word, you will add unto the load of infamy and reproach already cast upon it: let it be mixed with faith; if this heavenly ingredient is wanting, *your hearing, however frequent and zealous, is vain. Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity.* In this exhortation of the apostle is the sum of all CHRISTIAN MORALITY; and if these things, from right principles and motives, be in you, they will make you *that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful.*

Perhaps the persons into whose hands these papers may fall, require a word of consolation as well as instruction. You are poor, and your situation exposes you to many and great trials; it may be, you find them a sore burthen, apparently too heavy for you to bear. Be it so, you have these considerations to comfort yourselves with; first, *They are ordered by the Lord*; he is privy to, and designs some salutary end by them; we are poor disordered creatures, he is the Physician, and knoweth that we have need of all these things.

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The medicine may operate severely, but the several ingredients in it *will work together for good*; and however they may put you to pain for the present, they will be matter of praise hereafter. God Almighty doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; there is a necessity for all that he doeth, and the necessity is on our part; when he shall be *visibly* glorified by the several dispensations of his providence, your profiting will appear unto all men.

2dly, The Lord is daily answering your prayers wherein you request that his will may be done; it is enough that he hath promised he will fulfil the desires of the righteous: but how, or by what means he will perform his promise, is not for you to know; all you have to do, is to follow the prescriptions given unto you, and suffer the will of God concerning you. Ye have heard of the patience of *Job*, amidst a variety of the most complicated distresses, and have seen in the history of his life the end of the Lord, that he is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. You must acknowledge, that your blessings are more than a counter-balance to your distresses; and as you are assured, that an eternal weight of glory is to be the interest of your light afflictions, be steadfast and hope to the end, divine supports shall be given unto you, and if the period of your suffering season should be drawn out to an unusual length, the grace of God shall be sufficient for you,

you, and as your day is, so shall your strength be.

3dly. In the word of the Lord is both hope and comfort, and this is the word that is preached unto you. I should be sorry to make your temporal circumstances the alone objects of my attention, and I hope you have greater ends to answer, by hearing the gospel, than merely to alleviate the sorrow of the world. It so happens, that a tide of spiritual distress, frequently flows in upon the children of God with their temporal calamities, therefore a suitable remedy for both is deposited in the sacred word; and as wise stewards of the mysteries of God, ministers are to deal them out as the exigencies of the people require. If it is well with your souls, in other respects, all is and will be well. As JESUS is the FOUNTAIN of life, and always accessible and communicative, I beseech you to come unto him just as you are, poor and needy and bowed down. Cast all your burdens upon him, you may derive a supply for all your wants out of his fulness, he will withhold from you no manner of thing that is good; it is your privilege to trust in him at all times, and your peculiar mercy, that he will never leave you nor forsake you.

Thus much I thought necessary to say to you, my poor dear Brethren, in this dedication, to supply what may appear defective in the sermon; and now I beg an interest in your prayers, that God may give me a pilgrim heart with a pilgrim life,

life, that I may aim to promote no interest besides the kingdom of God, nor attempt to appear an advocate for any other party besides that which shall stand upon mount Sion. There it will be seen how sincerely I have been, and, so far as occasion offers, am yet

Your's affectionately,

To serve in the Gospel

Of our dear Lord Jesus,

BRISTOL,

CORNELIUS WINTER.

Oct. 5th, 1773.

A.C.T.S. xiii. 36.

For David, after he had served his generation by the will of God, fell on sleep.

IT may seem unseasonable to some, that a person who hath been dead three years should be the occasion of a sermon; and it must be acknowledged to be a case rarely known, yet the unusualness of it, does not determine the impropriety on some particular occasions, seeing the scripture declares, *the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.*† The present opportunity is designed to revive the memory of that great, and good man, the Rev. Mr. *Whitefield*; though I by no means intend to dwell so long upon his character as to engage your attention to a panegyrick, instead of a sermon, yet his memory is the leading cause of our meditation; but the meditation will (through the divine assistance) contain something more than a descant upon his memory.

The text is a part of St. Paul's sermon delivered in the synagogue at Antioch, where he preached JESUS CHRIST, with forgiveness of sins, and justification through faith in him;‡ the doctrine of the

† Psa. cxii. 6.

‡ Ver. 38, 39.

the resurrection, an essential part of the subject, is included † and proved from three notable passages of the scriptures; for as in them a discovery of eternal life is made, ministers should upon all occasions enquire what they say, and form their doctrines according to them. The passages from whence the resurrection is clearly proved, are the second and the sixteenth Psalm, and the fifty-first of Isaiah. The argument from the latter is, that Jesus Christ is the person strictly referred to, by the prophet: he is the covenant-head of his people; God has no way of entering into covenant with us but through him, in whom it hath pleased the Father, that all the sure mercies of it should dwell. It is in its duration everlasting, and the parties concerned in the covenant must be eternal, in order to be capable of performing the conditions and disposing of the benefits of it. The argument drawn from the sixteenth psalm, is, the assurance the psalmist had of his recovery from death; this also must be applied to the REDEEMER; he is emphatically the HOLY ONE of God: die he must, because he is substituted in the stead of those, who are by sin subject unto death; but the consequence of death shall not follow upon him; and that David is not literally the subject of these scriptures is evident, for, after that he had, by the will of God, served his own generation, he fell on sleep. The manner in which the

apostle

† Ver. 39, 31.

apostle expresseth the dissolution of the royal prophet, is a phraseology peculiar to the sacred scriptures, whereby they remove the gloomy aspect of death, and shew the way in which the righteous enter into peace.

The doctrine I intend to draw from the text may be summed up in this one proposition, viz. That persons of principal character, in different situations, under the influence of the will of God, are raised up to serve their generation.

This will appear if we consider, that, however inadequate the dispensations of Providence may appear to the superior and inferior classes of mankind, and however promiscuous and confused they seem among themselves; yet each are inspected into by an omnipotent eye that cannot be deceived, and managed by an omnipresent power that cannot be controuled. Just and righteous are his ways, whose providence ruleth over all; his plan is successful, and his work is uninterrupted, even while both seem to us, short-sighted creatures, to be jargon and confusion. Should it be asked, how it comes to pass, that one is exalted, without aspiring after promotion, while another is reduced notwithstanding the greatest diligence and the utmost assiduity? The answer is ready; it is of the Lord, *he pulleth down one and setteth up another*; † we do not rise and fall of ourselves, neither are we left to the disposal of blind chance: He hath said, *By me kings*

† Psalm lxxv. 7.

kings reign, and princes decree justice;† and what he taught by the pen of the royal moralist, he confirmed by his divine providence, the equity of which is never to be called in question. I now allude to the reign of Saul, and the accession of David to the throne. The character given of Saul and his father is, the one was a *mighty man of power,‡* the other a *choice young man, and goodly:--* that such an one should be set upon the throne, is not to be wondered at; and persons, *who look on things after the outward appearance,*|| might think that his qualifications were a motive with God to make him king in Israel; but when we consider, that his successor David was a person of *sc* opposite a character, that even Jesse did not think it worth while to send for him to stand in his lot with his brethren; Samuel had mistaken him at the distance of seven persons, and his brethren held him in the utmost contempt, that notwithstanding all this, God should chuse him in opposition to Saul, *to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance,*§ what can we infer from this; but that there is a motive in God for his proceedings not to be accounted for, by man, and that he *worketh all things after the counsel of his own will?**

Persons who object to an election of grace, cannot deny an election of providence, and, for my part, I can no more deny the one than the

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other.

† Pro. viii. 15.

‡ 1 Sam. ix. 1, 2.

|| 1 Cor. x. 7.

§ Psalm lxxviii. 71.

* Eph. i. 11.

other. There is indeed this difference. In the latter, persons may be the instruments to bring about that for the good of others, they have no interest in themselves; in the former, men may be useful to others, and themselves at the same time *partakers of the benefit*.† To prove this point, *Pharaoh* is a remarkable instance, *for this cause* (saith the Lord unto him by Moses) *have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power*;‡ and how did the power of God appear in him? Was it not in a way of judgment? The rebellious monarch resisted his sovereign pleasure; and, by thus opposing omnipotence, he destroyed himself.

The prophet *Isaiah* very plainly points out *Cyrus* to be the instrument of the church's deliverance from captivity; and at the same time declares him to be ignorant of the author of all his success; *I girded thee with strength, though thou hast not known me* § Originally his designs in going to war were in common the same with other men, namely, to gain conquest and get a great name for himself; but God's design was, that his own infinite *counsel* should *stand*, and, that he might *do all his pleasure*;|| for thus saith the Lord, *I have raised him up in righteousness, and will direct all his ways; he shall build my city, he shall let go my captives**. But *David* under the Old Testament dispensation, and *Paul* under

† 1 Tim. vi. 2.

‡ Exodus ix. 16.

§ Isaiah lxxv. 6.

|| Isaiah lxxvi. 10.

* Isaiah lxxv. 13.

under the the New, were employed in the best services, and shared in the enjoyment of those blessings they were instrumental of dispensing unto others. Happy is that people that is in such a case!

The view history gives us of tyrannical princes, and of laws and edicts, apparently only serving to indicate their savage and brutish tempers, may lead some to think we are not under the conduct of a Divine Providence, though we are assured from the revelation of God, that their thoughts are vain, there is not an evil, but what by a permissive providence, is from the Lord, (supposing it is only by permission) which is so far from being insignificant, that the accomplishment of events often turns upon it: in general, the main springs by which the wheels of providence are moved, are, the *wisdom of God*, whereby his will is often wrapped up in obscurity, and the *power of God*, by which he ordereth all things according to the *good pleasure of his will*. This led the apostle, in one of the most cruel ages of the world, to inculcate the doctrine of passive obedience, *let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God*†. Much might be advanced from St. Paul's advice to reconcile us to the most afflictive oppressions we may meet with from men of perverse minds, so

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that

† Rom xiii. 1.

that I intend to make the subject applicable to the case of gospel ministers.

Of all characters by which men of note are distinguished, that of a truly serious and pious minister is most valuable and important; kings and judges of the earth, with others of a subordinate station, are appointed for a short duration, and answer temporal purposes; but ministers of the gospel are ambassadors for Christ, and negotiate matters between God and immortal souls for ETERNITY. Some sustaining this sacred character are appointed to be more extensively useful in their generation than others. How small the gifts, and contracted the sphere of some! How numerous the abilities given to, and extensive the scene of action allotted for others! All receive their talents according to their several abilities, that each may *serve his generation by the will of God*. Highly honoured indeed are they who are *separated* by the divine purpose, *and called* by the divine appointment, unto the laudable and high employ; such honour have *not* all the saints; and those who have, should remember it proceeds intirely from GRACE. One who was counted worthy such an important trust, let us see the obligation he thought himself under for it, by acknowledging, *unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*†. The crosses

† Eph. iii. 8.

they interceded themselves with God in *their* behalf.

Speaking after the manner of men, the Lord is biassed by prayer, it is the key that gains us admission into the presence of God; it openeth and none can shut; let it come from an upright heart and great is its prevalency to restrain judgments, and to procure mercies; *for the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*† Of all men, ministers should be most expert at, and ready in this heavenly exercise; and for this purpose they should be observers of the signs of the times. The state of the nation, the situation of families, and the variety of circumstances peculiar to individuals, should perpetually employ them in prayer; and blessed be God, when they are cut off from all other opportunities of usefulness, this will remain, and be the last that shall be taken away from them. It may not appear to many, that prayer is of such importance; few know the interest praying ministers have in the court of heaven; but their heavenly Father, to whom they now pray in secret, will not only answer their prayers upon others, but will also reward them for their labour of love openly.

Secondly, As by their prayers, so also by their doctrine, ministers of the gospel are serviceable in their day. Whatever efforts are used to destroy iniquity, so long as the root remains, they are vain. The faithful minister lays the ax at the

root

† James v. 16.

root of sin, and perseveres in his endeavours to represent it in its proper colours; he does not think it enough to make a man moral, knowing that morality is but the surface of Christianity, and without spirituality (respecting our eternal state) is of itself nothing worth. On the other hand, spirituality includes and secures morality, and what all the moral swasion in the world hath failed in its attempts to accomplish, the doctrines of the gospel have happily brought to pass. Whenever they are preached with success, they transform the soul into the image of JESUS, and are productive of that holiness, which at once makes it delight in the law of God, and conform to the law of man. The truth of this will best appear by consulting the apostolic writings, which, in conjunction with the preceeding scriptures, are the source from whence evangelical ministers derive all they have to advance.

However, there are some unhappy instances of persons holding the truth in unrighteousness; these are no sufficient objections to the doctrines we preach, nor just arguments against them. The instances on the other hand are much more numerous and striking, of a blessed change wrought upon individuals, the happy effects accruing to families, and (so far as the word has run) of national impieties being reformed. Magistrates can do little good where the power of the gospel is wanting. Though they may have authority to imprison and enforce the penal laws, it appears from

from evident demonstration they have little power to reform. Our prisons constantly crouded, our places of execution frequently used, and the abounding of iniquity in all its shapes, shew the expediency of the blessed gospel; and the effects it hath produced in some notable instances, manifest how far ministers by their doctrine may serve their generation. A gospel ministry would by no means invalidate the civil magistracy, or lessen their importance in the esteem of their people, rather upon evangelical principles we enjoin them to submit themselves unto them as unto governors sent unto them by God, for the praise of them that do well; and it is not without some sufficient reason we conclude, they who are most under gospel influence are easiest swayed by civil authority.

Thirdly, It will appear, that together with their prayers and doctrine, by their life and conversation, ministers may render themselves serviceable to their generation.—Sound doctrine with a corrupt life, is like a body without the soul; wherever it goes it rather leaves a stench than a sweet savour, and though some men may take a sentiment out of the mouths of such unhappy persons, in general they are to be counted troublers of Israel, and rather a stumbling-block than a service to their generation. In what the blessed JESUS did for the apostle Paul, he made him a *pattern* and an example to them that should
hereafter

hereafter believe,† not only a pattern of long-suffering and an example of mercy, but also of good works, which God hath before ordained that‡ his chosen should walk in them. And happy, infinitely happy was it for the apostle, that in the several places where he preached the gospel, he could call God and the people to witness how holy, and justly; and unblameably § he had behaved himself, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world.||

—The young Bishop of Crete is exhorted to shew himself *a pattern of good works;†† recommending by his own example, the same subject he was to inculcate in his doctrine, that by each he might be emboldened to say, Be ye followers of me even also as I am of Christ.‡‡*

In another view, to shew how useful ministers should be in their lives, and how diffusive of their gifts, they are compared to the light; *Ye (says our Lord to his disciples) are the light of the world, §§ and the character of John the baptist was, that he was a burning and a shining light.||||* The reason wherefore they are hereunto likened is plain: the light from the first moment of its creation to the last of its existence, subserves the benevolent purpose of its great author, it refuses not its benign influence to any who have sight to receive it; and even serves to others for a conviction

† 1 Tim. i. 16.

‡ Eph. ii. 10.

§ 1 Thes. ii. 10.

|| 2 Cor. i. 12.

†† Tit. 2. 7.

‡‡ 1 Cor. xi. 1.

§§ Matt. v. 14.

|||| John v. 35.

conviction of their blindness. Surely it behoves us in the purity of our lives, and the soundness of our doctrine to be lights here, who have the promise, that we shall hereafter *shine as the stars for ever and ever.*† Thus it hath been with many dear ministers departed, and O that it may be abundantly so with us that remain! We have the example of many of our fellow-labourers to animate us, who *shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life*; ‡ and we have the exhortation of our blessed Lord to encourage us; *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*§ Though it is a night of ignorance, and the gross darkness of many may be so thick, that it cannot comprehend our light, yet we shall find some willing to enter the harbour of eternal rest, and we may be the means of preventing them from *making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience.*|| So far as our endeavours will extend, let us use them for the benefit of our Generation, and having discharged our duty by the will of God, whether we meet with little or no success, we need not be discouraged, or whether our labours are most prosperous, we have no right to be elated; but simply following the Lord, while employed in his work, we shall give him all the glory when our work is done.

Mr. Whitefield, who in the morning of this day
three

† Dan. xii. 3.

‡ Phil. ii. 15, 16.

§ Matt. v. 16.

|| 1 Tim. i. 19.

three years fell on sleep, in the above-mentioned instances remarkably served his generation by the will of God. It is not needful that I should say much concerning him, unless I could distinguish him by something that hath not been said by others before me. The observations that have been made in several Funeral Sermons, as well as what hath been drawn up at large in the volume containing the Memoirs of his Life, and what numbers of you also are living witnesses of, amount to this, viz. *He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, and much people was added unto the Lord, † through his ministry.* There was nothing in him praise-worthy, but what came *from the Father of lights*, and the mention of his name is not only out of respect to his valuable character, but principally to the praise of the glory of redeeming grace, by which he was enabled faithfully, successfully, and disinterestedly to serve his generation. His doctrine is upon record to support itself, and needs no other recommendation. Therefore all I shall say (and which is undoubtedly much to the honour of a departed minister) is, that many of you are his *epistle, known and read of all men. ‡*

It only remains for us now to improve the subject. And

First, May we not admire the goodness of God, whose care the church is, that though he removes one instrument, he will raise up another: when Moses was taken away, Joshua was provided

† Acts xi. 24.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 2.

vided to succeed him. And David had no sooner ended his service and finished his work upon earth, but Solomon was raised to the throne in his stead. But immediately to the present purpose: ministers are but men and must die, yet God will not leave himself without witnesses; if Paul is taken, Timothy shall be spared, and with a new generation new pastors shall arise, who *shall feed the children of God with knowledge and understanding.*† This should comfort us under the loss of our ministers, and reconcile us to their departure; the best of them are but *earthen vessels*, and vessels will wear out with long and frequent use. The Lord foreknows his people when they are at the greatest distance from him, and has appointed the day of their visitation, and when it approaches will raise up suitable instruments for the accomplishment of his purposes of grace towards them. As the Lord of the harvest he will procure labourers for the harvest season; his grain is too precious to be lost for want of means to gather it in. He enjoins our prayers for them, to shew us it is his prerogative to send them forth. Men may strive to procure them, but in vain without a divine mission.

Secondly, The removal of one and another out of the vineyard, should have some influence upon ministers and people. We who are ministers do not know how soon we may be set aside *like a broken vessel, wherein is no pleasure.*‡ While we have time, let us do good unto all men. Our
work

† Jer. iii. 15.

‡ Psalm xxxi. 12.

Hos. viii. 8.

work is of the greatest importance, it is to win souls to Jesus; let us therefore be active in, and devoted to it, and take care that our ministerial conduct be such, that in the hour of death, we may rejoice, that we have not *laboured in vain*; let us see to it, that we have not only sown in ourselves, but that we are savoury to others, manifesting the savour of the knowledge of Jesus in every place; and that we go forth with a zeal and seriousness becoming our character. Let us not be like a candle in an empty room, spending ourselves without any profit to others; but to the people of the world, let us be like a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and in hopes that the day-star may soon arise in their hearts. To the children of God, let us be messengers of peace, bringing the peaceful gospel unto them, and endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. We live in a day in which many professors have left contending earnestly for the faith, and turned aside unto vain jangling, and have raised nostrums of their own, to the intire subversion of *truth*. Luke-warmness hath taken the place of zeal, animosities have dethroned love, and as though *Christ* was *divided*, and *Paul* was *crucified for us*, or we were *baptized in the name of Paul*, we are like the *Corinthians*, crying, I am of *Paul*, I of *Apollos*, &c. Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, but strive to put an end to these unhappy differences, in meekness and faithfulness, reproving the abettors of them, and praying for the blessed time, when all contentions shall be

lost in universal determination to know nothing save Jesus Christ.

3dly, Those of you, my brethren, especially who are the fruit of Mr. *Whitefield's* ministry, *and the seals of his apostleship in the Lord*,† should remember his character with thankfulness. When you were running on in a mad career of sin, the Lord in love to your souls, sent his servant after you, and by his ministry *plucked you as a brand out of the fire*.‡ God never raises up an instrument, but he appoints him his work; and therefore humanly speaking, had a *Whitefield* been wanting, your poor souls had been like your neighbours, *alienated from the life of God*, and *presuming* upon his mercy, till you had become monuments of his divine justice. Happy for you, that he lived in your day; and that the almighty power which raised him up, through him, made you partakers of *the spirit that giveth life*.|| O that he may live in you, as the disposition and temper of the parent in the child, that (by your life and conversation) being dead he may yet speak.

4thly, And by way of caution to professors, *Take heed how you hear*,§ and what use you make of your ministers. *If they are only unto you, as a very lovely song, of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument,** or you can contract a natural esteem for them, destitute at the same time of any spiritual improvement from them, whatever general use they may

be

† 1 Cor. ix. 2.

‡ Zech. iii. 2.

|| 2 Cor. iii. 6.

§ Luke viii. 18.

* Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

be of in their generation, it is evident they are of none to you in particular. In the great day, God will deal with you as with a converted, or an unconverted soul; and if you are not their *joy and crown of rejoicing*, it will do you little good to reflect upon the cadence of their voice, or any other acceptable talent providence may have furnished them with, for the ready discharge of their work. Have we not great reason to fear, that the motive with many, for making an acquaintance with ministers, and becoming a part of a crowded congregation, is because they are men of popularity and ingenuity? The ground of this suspicion is the unholiness of their lives, the worldliness of their hearts, and the levity of their conversation; which amidst the most splendid profession, subjects them to that reproachful question with all their pretences, *what do you more than others?*† Let such think how awful it will be to be separated from those in ETERNITY, with whom they have maintained the closest connection in TIME; it is not a love for their persons, nor an esteem for their sentiments, that will secure the continuance of their intimacy; no, nothing short of an heartfelt experimental knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, can encourage ministers and people, to hope they shall be together with the Lord. Therefore do not blind their eyes with a gift, and think to put a deception upon their judgment by a form of godliness; but, as you would bring every doctrine to the test of God's word,

see

† Mat. v. 47.

see that you bring your life to the test of that doctrine, which teaches you to *be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness.*

5thly and lastly, I cannot close this discourse without directing a word to you, who despised this faithful minister of Jesus, because he opposed your sins. It may be, the faithful monitor has made your heart ach; and under some occasional opportunities you could not withstand the words with which he spake; that he might be a means of mercy to your souls, he laid on unmercifully upon your lusts; he would not prophesy smooth things, because he knew you required plain dealing. You would not fall out with yourselves, and therefore you have been offended with the minister. He now perhaps stands a very exceptionable character in your judgment, because he was an honest *Micaiah* to you. Very well, remember you stand a character equally exceptionable in the dooms-day book of God, and the consequence is, you shall not stand in the judgment if you die as you live. Should you be a curious hearer, you have a warning equally sincere, as that the gospel champion would give you, if he was in my stead, though not attended with such heavenly eloquence. Inlisted into the same service, by the will of God, I would fain be serviceable to my generation in the same way; and this I can only be, by shewing you the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the preciousness of Jesus. O that by believing you may have life through his name!

